

DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION

June 19, 1995

Memorandum

TO: Melba McGee

FROM: Stephen Hall SH

SUBJECT: Scoping -- US 17 Improvements, Jacksonville to New Bern, Onslow County

REFERENCE: 95-0871

The Natural Heritage Program database contains records for several rare plants from the vicinity of this project. The most significant is a very large population -- a thousand plants or more -- of spring-flowering goldenrod (*Solidago verna*), which is a candidate for federal listing and state listed as Endangered. This population is located along the roadside rights-of-way on both sides of US 17, from about 1 mile north of the junction of NC 58 to about one mile south of SR 1107. This entire strip, which also contains a record for gopher frog (*Rana capito*), another candidate for federal listing and state listed as Special Concern, has been identified as a Priority Natural Area by the Natural Heritage Program.

Spring-flowering goldenrod has also been observed along US 17 south of Maysville, as have two additional species of rare plants: Florida yellow-eyed grass (*Xyris difformis* var. *floridanum*) and Hooker's milkwort (*Polygala hookeri*), both of which are candidates for state listing. Given the significance of the mowed rights-of-way along this section of US 17, we strongly recommend that a survey be conducted for these and other rare species of plants that may occur in this area. Alignments for the widening should be selected that avoid damage to these species as much as possible, particularly the large population of the goldenrod. We further recommend that the NC Plant Conservation Program be consulted in order to determine whether transplantation or other forms of mitigation would be desirable.

In addition to the rare plants, two species of rare aquatic animals have been recorded from the Trent River near the US 17 bridge crossing: eastern lampmussel (*Lampsilis radiata*) and Neuse River waterdog (*Necturus lewisi*), both of which are state listed as Special Concern. In order to protect populations of these species and other aquatic organisms, we recommend that all best management practices for the control of erosion and sedimentation be followed, particularly in the vicinity of the Trent River and its tributaries.